DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 303 903 EA 020 730

AUTHOR Urbach, Sherry
TITLE The Role of Alternative Education Programs in American Secondary Schools.
PUB DATE Nov 88
NOTE 47p.; Master's Exit Project, Indiana University at South Bend.
PUB TYPE Reference Materials - Bibliographies (131) -- Dissertations/Theses - Undetermined (040)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Annotated Bibliographies; *Educational Development; *Nontraditional Education; Program Design; *Program Development; *School Choice; *Secondary Education; Traditional Schools

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the various types of alternative programs offered in American secondary schools, the ways in which they differ from traditional programs, and their success in educating their students, particularly those classified as at risk. The question "Should students have a choice of schools?" is examined in annotated bibliography format. An account of the growth of the alternative movement comprises the second section. This is followed by a discussion of the general characteristics of alternative programs, advantages and disadvantages of such programs, and how they differ from those found in traditional schools. The next section describes the three types of alternative programs and gives examples of each. The paper concludes with guidelines for establishing and maintaining an alternative program. Appended are 59 references. (SI)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED303903

THE ROLE OF ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN AMERICAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

by
Sherry Urbach

Study Directed
by
Charles R. DuVall, Ph. D.

Exit Project
for S591
Indiana University at South Bend
November 1988

EA 080 730

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sherry Urbach

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION 1
- Statement of the Problem 1
- Purpose of the Study 2
- Organization of the Study 2
- Limitations of the Study 2
- Glossary 3

ANNOTATIONS
- Why Offer Choices 4
- Growth of Alternative Movement 7
- Characteristics of Alternative Programs 8
- Advantages and Disadvantages 11
- How Alternatives Differ from Traditional (or Regular) Programs 14
- Kinds of Alternative Programs 18
- Schools Designed Around a Specific Curriculum 19
  - Examples 20
- Schools Designed for Special Groups of Students 21
  - Examples 24
- Schools Designed Around Special Philosophies or Methods 27
  - Examples 27
- Guidelines for Alternative Programs 29

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS
- Summary 31
- Conclusions 37
- Recommendations 38

BIBLIOGRAPHY 39

STUDENT QUALIFICATIONS 44

INTRODUCTION

Although "polls reveal that from 60 to 70 percent of those who use public schools express satisfaction with them" (Fantini, 141), there are a number of families that would like a choice of the kind of school their children attend; and there are a number of children for whom traditional schools have not been successful. Around 25 percent of students drop out of school before graduation, and 35 to 40 percent of students K-12 are considered at-risk ("Technology," 35). It is in response to these problems that many school systems have introduced alternative programs. Raywid (Synthesis," 71) in a recent survey identified 2500 secondary alternative schools but estimates that there are many more. ("Alternative programs frequently arise out of a sense of failure--a sense that the regular program has failed an important student segment, the alienated, the gifted, the vocationally-oriented" (Robbins et al., 48).) In providing these, school districts hope to promote integration, provide students with choices, and help meet the needs of at-risk students.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Even though American students come from racially, culturally, and economically diverse backgrounds, most are able to succeed in traditional secondary schools; however, there are a number of students who want and need an alternative form of education.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to explore the various types of alternative programs offered in American secondary schools, how they differ from traditional programs, and their success in educating their students, particularly those classified as at-risk.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This paper begins with an examination of the question, "Should students have a choice of schools?" An account of the growth of the alternative movement comprises the second section. This is followed by a discussion of the general characteristics of alternative programs, advantages and disadvantages of such programs, and how they differ from traditional schools. The next section describes the three types of alternative programs and gives examples of each. The paper concludes with guidelines for establishing and maintaining an alternative program.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study did not include programs that are called alternative in the South but which are generally regarded as in-school suspension. One of the problems encountered was the scarcity of research on the effectiveness of alternative programs other than those for dropouts (Raywid, "Synthesis," 74).

GLOSSARY

Alternative education (also sometimes referred to as experimental education: ". . . Characterized by practices different from those of the typical public or private school, perhaps based on an essentially different philosophy of education" (Good, 228).

Alternative education: Based on assumption, "Different people learn in different ways. Different teachers teach in different ways" (Barr, 571).

At-risk: "Those Youths who have serious personal and/or academic problems that are likely to lead to dropping out" (Wehlage, "Reform," 18).

At-risk: "Someone whose needs are not being met by society and who is in danger, or at-risk, of not being able to lead a productive life" ("Technology", 36).

Free schools: "Humanistic free choice education with a degree of certitude of academic excellence and conventional morality" (Wardle, 105).

Maslow's hierarchy: "A taxonomy of levels of human needs leading to self-actualization" (Gage, 383).

Open schools: "A highly individualized approach to education stressing the value of the individual; an educational philosophy and practice which sees both learning and knowledge as an interactive process between the learner and the thing known" (Hein, 551).

Tracking (track system): "A term used in some high school curriculum programs to designate the various groupings; there are tracks for slow, average, and fast learners" (Good, 612).

Voucher plan: "A plan to distribute educational monies through issuance to parents directly of a voucher allocating public funds to pay the cost of their children's education in either a public or a private school of their choice" (Good, 646).

Walkabout (Sometimes known as Challenge Education): "Program aimed at providing a better transition from dependency of adolescence to independence and self-responsibility of adulthood" (Raywid, "Synthesis," 76).

ANNOTATIONS

WHY OFFER CHOICES?

Barr, Robert D. "Alternatives for the Eighties; A Second Decade of Development." Phi Delta Kappan 62 (April 1981): 570-73.

Barr stated that it is important "to develop an educational system in which parents, students, and teachers can choose the type of program they believe to be in their best interests" (571). He said that in the 1980's alternative schools can help confront and reduce serious problems schools face--violence, vandalism, and segregation. He also stated that giving students choices improves their attitudes and self-concepts.

Murname, Richard J. "Family Choice in Public Education: Possibilities and Limitations." Microfiche. Howard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1984.

This paper explored the advantages and disadvantages of allowing students choice as to which school they would attend. Murname stated that "allowing families to choose among alternative programs . . . may facilitate the matching of student interests and capabilities with program characteristics and thereby stimulate effort and cooperation" (3). Problems which he posed were: Would all families have enough information to make informed program choices? Would students choose the easiest programs? Would some students be denied access to programs and become disheartened? Murname (22) also voiced the concern that there is some evidence that an increase in curriculum choices has contributed to a reduction of the achievement of basic skills of high school students.

He concluded that family choice can improve quality of education provided to some children, particularly those "whose parents value education and encourage cooperative in-school behavior and regular completion of homework" (35).

Nathan , Joe. "Results and Future Prospects of State Efforts to Increase Choice Among Schools." Phi Delta Kappan (June 1987): 746-52.

Nathan stated that there is growing interest in providing choices for parents and students as to which school they will attend. States that do offer choices have found, upon evaluation of their efforts, that it has helped to "reduce dropouts, increase student achievement and appreciation of learning, improve parental involvement and satisfaction, encourage racial and economic integration, provide extra challenge for students dissatisfied with conventional programs, and raise the morale of educators who were allowed to create distinctive programs from which families can choose" (747).

In order to have a successful plan for offering a choice of schools, a school district should insist on the development of a list of essential skills and knowledge that all students should master. There should be transportation for all students, general dissemination of information about student placement policies, and inservice training for teachers.

Nathan, Joe. "The Rhetoric and the Reality of Expanding Educational Choice." Phi Delta Kappan 66 (March 1985): 476-81.

Nathan examined research to explore the impact alternatives had on public schools and on handicapped, disruptive, or minority students. He found that some school districts are allowing "families to choose among schools with similar goals but different methods of accomplishing them." "Research [shows] that expanded choice benefits students and teachers" and "helps build parental and community support for schools" (476).

One of the concerns is that choices will "destroy the public schools." In two states in which there are tax rebates for families choosing private schools this has not happened. In New York City where vouchers could be used by handicapped students who wanted to attend private schools, they found that private schools could often meet the needs of these students better than public schools. In the state of Washington, the state has helped support private clinics for alienated students and concluded that, "'On the basis of costs, outcomes, and educational gains, the clinics make a good showing'" (481).

Reckinger, Nancy. "Choice as a Way to Quality Learning." Educational Leadership 36 (January 1979): 255-6.

Reckinger insisted that traditional schools do not accommodate oral, kinesthetic, or independent learners (255) and many other learning styles. She says that "70 to 80 percent of the youths in juvenile detention facilities are auditory learners" and that "62 percent of our student population does not function well in the traditional school, partly because they do not have traditional learning styles and personalities" (255). She states that parents and students should have choices of alternative programs that can best accommodate their learning styles.

Scovic, Stephen P. "Some of Those Ideas We Mistook for Panaceas Deserve Another Chance." American School Board Journal 72 (July 1985): 28-9.

Scovic stated that tradition was not sufficient reason to keep old methods of teaching and learning. Alternative approaches are needed in curriculum, testing, and instruction. Goodlad's research on more than a thousand classrooms showed that traditional curriculum focuses primarily on facts and rote learning. An alternative approach would list specific objectives, test on application and comparison, and require that students "become actively involved in learning."

Benjamin Bloom's studies of student testing suggests that we only need give students aptitude and intelligence tests to predict the amount of time it would take a student to learn the material; and that, since if given enough time, most students can master the material, achievement tests are unnecessary.

Sherew, Ken. "Alternatives: A Way of Life." Thrust 17 (April 1988): 8-9.

Sherew stated that this nation was founded by those desiring freedom of choice and that to best meet the needs of all the people, there must be options in education. Our system of education must optimize human achievement by offering students an educational atmosphere that brings out their full potential. We accept differences of products, color, race, size and styles. Now we must start accepting difference in the way students learn and obtain their education (8). He then presented a chart listing the options offered in California.

GROWTH OF ALTERNATIVE MOVEMENT

Fantini, Mario D. "The What, Why, and Where of the Alternatives Movement." The Education Digest 51 (November 1985): 139-42.

The alternatives movement began with the civil rights movement of the 1960's. The push of desegregation "led to the establishment of temporary freedom schools in storefronts and church basements." Three other trends have also contributed to the growth of alternative public education: (1) the counter culture movement interested in developing "new learning environments that are personally liberating and geared to individual and group life styles;" (2) British open classrooms; (3) the voucher plan in which a family can choose private or public schools.

Alternatives that can be provided by public school are: letting students and parents choose the program that best suits the child's learning style and letting teachers teach in programs that best match their personal temperament and approach. Alternatives need not be more expensive if there is an effort made to use existing resources "differently and more effectively."

Helm, Virginia. "Alternative Education: Metamorphosis of a Movement." The Educational Forum 44 (November 1979): 53-57.

Helm described the growth of alternative education from "small, experimental schools with the express purpose of defying nearly everything the public school represented" (54) in the 60's to "a network of alternatives which have become incorporated into a growing number of school systems across the country" (57). Her explanation for this includes recent court and state commissioners of education decisions requiring "alternative educational opportunities for students expelled . . . for more than five days" (55), an increased emphasis on keeping potential dropouts in school, and a lessening of the anti-establishment fervor.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS

Powell, Arthur G., Eleanor Farrar, and David K. Cohen. "Specialty Shops." The Shopping Mall High School. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985. 129-132.

High schools are compared to specialty shops in shopping malls. Some of the "specialty shops" are alternative programs --"fashion and merchandising, performing arts, science and technology, communication, and agribusiness" (129). They state that these programs share the common characteristics of: "Students who have chosen to be there; teachers who are willing to work individually with students. . .; and the special feeling of accomplishment that comes from learning a skill or producing a viable product" (130). In these programs social skills and survival skills are emphasized along with "the rules of work and community life" (131). The specialty shops also share the following traits: (1)advocacy--a group either within the school or from outside gives them unusual support; (2) an admission process; (3) a limited range of choices of curriculum; (4) extra attention for students from parents and teachers; (5) high morale among teachers.

Raywid, Mary Anne. "Synthesis of Research on Schools of Choice." Educational Leadership 41 (April 84) 70-8.

"Among the educational innovations introduced during the 1960's, alternatives--or schools of choice--have proved one of the most durable and are increasingly finding support from research" (71). Characteristics of an alternative school are: (1) A strong sense of affiliation and loyalty to the unit both on the part of the faculty and on the part of the students. (2) Students and staff are there by choice. (3) The alternative is designed to respond to particular needs or interests not met in local schools. (4) Developing the whole person, not only academics, is considered important. (5) Most are smaller than conventional schools. (6) Some are separate schools and some are schools-within-schools.

Satisfaction by students seems to derive from the smallness of the program which enables everyone to know everyone else; from having fewer bureaucratic controls; from more and broader responsibility; a strong sense of power; more freedom in clothing, language, and personal style; flexibility in what they study; and teachers who care. Teachers are more satisfied because of greater autonomy in what and how they teach and increased collegiality.

The two instructional methods unique to alternative schools are the use of independent study and experiential learning. In programs designed for "at-risk" students there seems to be improvement in attendance, attitude and learning.

Smith, Gerald R., Marion McCollum, and George Barclay. "Student and Teacher Perception of Values Promoted by Public Alternative High Schools." Phi Delta Kappan 61 (March 1980): 494-5.

The authors conducted a survey of teachers and students in eight alternative high schools in the Midwest to determine if there was a common set of core values in these schools. Seven values were mentioned by a high percentage of both students and teachers: flexibility, responsibility, warmth, freedom, individuality, involvement, and control (494). A second set mentioned, but less frequently, included authenticity, disengagement, achievement, informality, equality, cooperation, and liveliness. The authors concluded "that there is little overlap between the values of public alternative and public comprehensive schools" (495).

Smith, Gerald R., Thomas B. Gregory, and Richard C. Pugh. "Meeting Student Needs: Evidence of the Superiority of Alternative Schools." Phi Delta Kappan (April 1981): 561-64.

The authors developed "The Statement About Schools Inventory." From the use of this they state "that alternative schools come closer to satisfying student needs, as defined by Maslow's hierarchy, than do conventional schools" (561). In querying students and teachers of seven alternative and six traditional high schools in four states, the authors found that alternative schools met the needs identified as social, esteem, and self-actualization better than traditional schools, but there was no difference in meeting security needs dispelling the idea that alternative schools "place too little emphasis on order, control, and stability" (562).

The characteristic the authors found that all alternative schools shared was that students had chosen to attend those schools. They state that it's hard to understand "why alternative school programs, which actually put into practice this concept of free choice that is central to our society, are still more likely to be viewed as aberrations to be ignored rather than exemplars to be emulated" (564).

Stevens, Marcia. "Characteristics of Alternative Schools." American Educational Research Journal (Spring 1985): 135-48

Twelve alternative secondary schools in Denver were studied to determine how students' perceptions of the learning environment of their school varied with the organization of the school. Six of the schools were funded by the district and were volunteer. Four were for students with problems; and, although entrance was voluntary, many had been recommended by a referring agency. Two schools were called composite schools that attracted students who wanted more independence, self-directed studies, and out-of-classroom experiences. The biggest contrast was between composite schools and the schools for problem students. Composite students regarded their school higher in cohesiveness, diversity, and satisfaction and lowest in apathy, friction, and disorganization. Problem schools had the lowest scores on diversity and the highest on friction. However, students in these schools developed the highest identification with their school.

Wolf, W.C., Jr., and Mike Barkhurst. "Initiating, Sustaining Alternative Schools." Phi Delta Kappan 59 (May 1978): 635-6.

The authors reported on a study of six New England alternative schools. Among their findings were the following. Nearly two-thirds have 100 or fewer students. Enrollment is voluntary in the majority. "Students from low and middle socioeconomic classes constitute most of the enrollment" (635). Students are from suburban and urban communities. "Most of the schools were started by an individual or by a small group of teachers, students, or parents." Information about the schools was disseminated through "demonstrations, informal conversations, and printed materials" (636).

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Argyris, Chris. "Alternative Schools: A Behavioral Analysis." Teachers College Record (May 1974): 429-52.

In this study Argyris described the research on the decline in effectiveness of most alternative schools. Although the schools began with high hopes of openness, trust, joint decision making between teachers and students, greater responsibility on the part of the students for their education, he found that at the end of about a year many of these goals had reverted to conditions found in most traditional schools. Teachers were withdrawing; students wanted teachers to make the decisions; there was an increase in vandalism; teachers were exerting more control over their classes; and there was less open-ended activity.

Beauvais, F., and E. R. Oetting. "Drug Use In an Alternative High School." Journal of Drug Education 16 (1986): 43-50.

The authors reported data collected on drug use in an alternative high school populated by former dropouts and students who had transferred there after having behavioral problems in their home school. The survey found that 100 percent of the students had tried alcohol; 97.5 percent had tried marijuana; and 75 percent had tried cocaine (46). Drug use of all kinds was much higher in this alternative school than in the regular high school, and the students there started using alcohol and marijuana earlier than in regular school. The authors remarked that dropouts are students with problems and it wasn't clear which came first, the drug use or the problems. ". . .School problems have created attitudes, values, and behaviors that encouraged drug use, and, at the same time, drugs have led to attitudes, values, and behaviors that created school problems" (49).

Carrison, Muriel P. "Do Magnet Schools Really Work?" Principal 60 (January 81): 32-5.

Carrison presented several problems he found with magnet schools. He stated that they may be so specialized that their training does not meet broad educational objectives that all students need or that "parental and students choices . . . will prematurely track the children of the rich and the poor, limiting their versatility and later educational choices and continuing and intensifying socioeconomic class division within our society" (33). Carrison questioned, also, whether competent specialized staff could be found without depleting the staff in the regular schools. He was also concerned that magnet schools are not as successful in desegregation as originally hoped. He believes that they may attract middle class minority students but that poor of all races "do not have the time, money, or interest" (34) to transport their children to other than neighborhood schools.

Duke, Daniel L., and Cheryl Perry. "Can Alternative Schools Succeed Where Benjamin Spock, Spiro Agnew, and B. F. Skinner Have Failed?" Adolescence 13 (Fall 1978): 375-92.

This study was conducted to determine if behavior of students was better in alternative high schools than in regular schools. The authors state that "many students can achieve relatively well academically in these [alternative] schools" (376). In studying behavior they found that there were fewer problems of "student absenteeism, classroom disruptiveness, theft, vandalism, and agressive behavior" (378). The most frequently mentioned problems were attendance, failure to complete assignments, and drug use (380). Characteristics of the schools that seemed to contribute to the lack of discipline problems were: their small size; fewer teachers with correspondingly fewer opportunities for "conflicting expectations and inconsistent rule enforcement" (383); homogeneous student body; flexible scheduling; students treated as adults--students were expected to contribute to the governance of the school and participate in resolutions of conflicts; fewer rules; and caring, trained teachers.

Duke, Daniel Linden, and Irene Muzio. "How Effective Are Alternative Schools? A review of Recent Evaluations and Reports." Teachers College Record 79 (February 1978): 461-83.

This was a review of 19 evaluations or reports dealing with alternative schools. Small size was common to all. Objectives cited most frequently were the "development of language, reading and mathematics skills" (468). Although "they attract academically competent, white, middle class students," (468) six of them reported at least 40 percent black students. The results of standardized tests were inconclusive in measuring the effectiveness of alternative schools. Eight schools reported improvement in students' attitude toward school; all reported better attendance and classroom performance and fewer dropouts. There was a general feeling of improved social behavior--less fighting, fewer racial problems, and decreased drug use.

Wardle, Francis. "Can Free Schools Survive?" Education 100 (Winter 1979): 165-9.

"The free school movement in American is fast approaching extinction," (165) stated Wardle. Based on her experience in working in free schools and on a survey of other free schools, she discussed the demise of these. She stated that those developing the school do not have a common philosophy or teachers trained to implement it. While most schools expect students to help make decisions about the school, they have not trained their students to do so. "The shortage of money and other financial support" (167) causes failure of the schools. The children have difficulty "understanding the philosophy of the school and resolving the freedom of the school with the unfree society and their need for security in that society." Parents become disenchanted and leave.

HOW ALTERNATIVES DIFFER FROM TRADITIONAL (OR REGULAR) PROGRAMS

Gregory, Thomas B., and Gerald R. Smith. "Differences Between Alternative and Conventional Schools in Meeting Students' Needs." Microfiche. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Education Research Association, Montreal, April 11, 1983.

The authors conducted a study of 14 alternative and 11 conventional schools in 10 states and administered a questionnaire asking students and teachers to rate how their school met students' needs in the areas of security, social, esteem, and self-actualization. The alternative schools were judged better in meeting the three higher level needs (social, esteem, and self-actualization.) There was little difference in the two types of schools in their ability to meet security needs (8).

Higgen, Ann, and others. "Student Judgments of Responsibility and the Moral Atmosphere of High Schools: A Comparative Study. Revised." Microfiche. Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. 1981.

The authors analyzed the moral judgment of students in three alternative schools and three regular high schools. The alternative students who had participated in making decisions and enforcing rules for the school showed greater responsibility in their moral decisions. When presented sample case studies these students were more likely to make decisions in which not only the individual's rights were considered, but they were also concerned about fulfilling his needs. They also showed more social responsibility. The authors concluded that this may have been enhanced by the strong sense of community of the alternative schools.

Nirenberg, John. "A Comparison of the Management Systems of Traditional and Alternative Public High Schools." Educational Administration Quarterly 13 (Winter 1977): 86-104.

Nirenberg examined the "difference in administrative climate, teacher sense of power, the degree of bureaucratization, and the degree of professionalism in traditional and alternative public high schools" (87). The alternative schools scored higher on the sub-scales of goal commitment, decision process, team cooperation, trust, teacher involvement, and other categories describing administrative climate. The teachers in the alternative school scored twice as high as traditional teachers on the "Teacher Sense of Power Scale." The teachers in traditional schools rated their schools higher in bureaucratization--"a higher degree of complexity, formalization, and centralization. . . . There was no significant difference in degree of professionalization. . ." (100).

Ogletree, Earl J., and Valerie A. Bryant. "Inner-City Alternative Students Conservative, but Know Rights." Phi Delta Kappan 62: (April 1981) 602.

Black students surveyed by the author in an inner city Chicago alternative high school were more conservative than those in a similar traditional high school. The alternative students were opposed to students' speaking out without permission in class or using abusive language. They thought long hair, Afros, braids and rollers, open shirts, short skirts or brief shorts inappropriate in school. Seventy-eight percent of public school students approved of wild hairstyles, and 84 percent thought the above-described dress suitable. However, when it came to constitutional rights, 52 percent of alternative students "totally rejected the school's right to search students" and 29 percent "accepted the school's right to seize students property under any circumstance, but 55 percent of public school students thought 'reasonable' seizure within the school's rights." Alternative students were in favor of stricter discipline in the areas of serious misconduct, destruction of school property, and in favor of suspensions being entered on a student's record.

Parrett, Williana H. "Conventional vs. Alternative Schools: How Different Are the Teachers." Phi Delta Kappan 62 (April 1981): 603.

Parrett studied alternative schools and traditional public schools in five states and found instruction in both remarkably similar. Both considered "selecting appropriate learning activities, planning those activities, and presenting subject matter both visually and orally" as most important. "Both groups also placed such 'nontraditional' practices as individualizing instruction, pass/fail grading . . . and out-of school experiences. . . on their lists of preferred practices." However, alternative teachers were more likely to use community resources, to prepare their own materials, to use learning contracts, to use materials other than the textbook, and "to be concerned with problems and feelings of individual students." Teachers in traditional schools were more concerned with quiet classrooms and used lectures and objective tests more frequently.

Raywid, Mary Anne. "The Current Status of Schools of Choice in Public Secondary Education: Alternatives, Options, Magnets." Microfiche. Hofstra University, Hempstead, N. Y. 1982: 1-38.

Raywid surveyed 1200 secondary alternative schools and reported her results. She found that teacher-student interaction was the feature most felt was most distinctive about them. The costs were no greater in 62 percent of the schools than in other local schools. The schools felt their future was secure. Attendance went up in 81 percent of the schools. The primary focus of the schools is on basic skills. Most were established because of needs that were not met in traditional schools or as a solution to specific problems of truancy or dropouts.

The alternative schools differ from traditional schools in these ways: (1) greater student-teacher interaction; (2) more independent study; (3) multi-age arrangements; (4) more peer tutoring; (5) community service activities; (6) expectation that teacher will succeed with all students (25); (7) better student behavior.

Weber, James M., and Judith A. Sechler. "Characteristics of Exemplary Vocational Education Programs Designed to Prevent At-Risk Youth from Dropping Out." Educational Leadership (March 1987): 72.

Weber and Sechler reviewed nine vocational programs and identified those characteristics common to the ones which seemed to be successful in combatting the dropout problem. They found that such programs have a different environment from traditional schools; there is a low teacher-pupil ratio; they are aimed at training the whole person; they use a combination of "remedial basic skills, parental involvement, work experience . . ., counseling, supportive services, and vocational training"; programs focus on freshmen or sophomores.

The successful programs are staffed by special, committed teachers, teachers who are interested in establishing close relationships with their students, who are flexible, who use strong motivational techniques and individualized instruction.

KINDS OF ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS

Barr, Robert, Bruce Colston, William Parrett. "The Effectiveness of Alternative Public Schools: An Analysis of Six School Evaluations." Viewpoint 53 (July 1977): 1-30.

The authors divided alternative schools into five categories: (1) Those that focus on an instructional approach--Montessori, individualized, continuous progress, etc.; (2) those that focus on curriculum; (3) those that focus on special students--drop-outs, pregnant girls; (4) those that focus on special resources or facilities; and (5) those that focus on administration and organization--schools-within-schools. (1-2)

In the authors' analysis of six alternative schools they found that most students' achievement of cognitive skills was as good as, if not better, than that of traditional school students; the attitude of the alternative school students toward themselves and school was higher; there was a decrease in student dropout and an increase in school attendance; and graduates felt they had been prepared for college and for life. (27-28)

Johnson, H. R. "Alternative Schools: A Salvage Operation?" Clearing House 55 (March 1982): 317-18.

It is the assumption of many that alternative schools are only for dropouts and, therefore, there is frequently resistance to funding them feeling that funds are then diverted from programs for gifted and average students. Contrary to this belief, however, are the alternative programs for many different kinds of students, two of which are the open school and the fundamental school. Open schools allow students more say in their own program, and the students frequently work through contracts and learning packages. Fundamental schools promote a rigorous approach focused on high achievement of a basic education. The author stated that what was needed within a school district was a "balance of alternatives."

SCHOOLS DESIGNED AROUND A SPECIFIC CURRICULUM

Doyle, Dennis P. and Marsha Levine. "Magnet Schools." Microfiche. Education Policy Studies Occasional Papers, American Interprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Washington, D. C., 1983.

Magnet schools are designed to attract students and faculty by their special qualities. The key characteristics that define magnet schools are voluntary enrollment and diversity. "Typically they are organized by pedagogical theme, science and math, music and art, or the humanities, for example" (4). Schools have traditionally been organized around neighborhoods and all are very much alike arising out of the conviction that "'one best system'" could be designed. This often produced racially segregated schools offering a broad range of topics but with no great depth in any one. Thus magnet schools were born.

A magnet school may require standards of dress and behavior, additional homework, and community service. Magnet schools may be created to promote racial integration, provide special instruction for gifted students, or to offer vocational training. Some may offer special training in the arts, in aviation, in international affairs, or in health occupations.

Research reveals that magnet schools often have "higher levels of teacher and student motivation, higher achievement, success with racial integration, significantly reduced behavior problems, greater teacher satisfaction, reasonable costs, and the like" (19). They are not, as has been charged, elitist. A necessary ingredient to "successful magnet schools is strong support from the Superintendent and School Board" which is "almost always related to strong community support" (20).

Norris, Bill. "Reaping the Whirlwind." Times Educational Supplement 3678 (December 26, 1986): 32.

Norris told, in parable form of the development of the magnet school as an answer to integration. He said that the complaints of the public were that they were elitist and that they were discriminating against the average achiever. However, after Bell's declaration of "a nation at risk" and the pursuit of excellence became popular, the magnet schools are again thought to be desirable.

Examples

Campbell, Erin E. "School for Scholars." American Educator 19 (July 1983): 36-39.

The author described North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics, a residential high school for juniors and seniors gifted in science and math. The average student takes 60 percent of his courses in science and math and 40 percent in other areas (36). In addition the students must attend Saturday morning lectures, help with housekeeping and groundskeeping, and volunteer in hospitals, schools, or offices. Many seniors work in laboratories at Duke University Medical Center. In 1982 the school ranked second in the country in the National Merit Scholarship semifinals.

Miller, William, and others. "Louisiana's Alternative High School for Foreign Language and International Studies." Microfiche. Paper presented at Annual Meetings of the National Council for Social Studies and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language. San Francisco, 1983.

The paper described an alternative high school established in New Orleans as a result of the belief of educators in that area that "foreign language [was] needed for the Louisiana international business community." The school was established by the Louisiana Department of Education and had the support and services of the French government. An evaluation at the end of 1982-83 found that such a program was useful, and three new schools were established; but there were problems of transportation, funding, staffing, and recruitment with all of the schools.

SCHOOLS DESIGNED FOR SPECIAL GROUPS OF STUDENTS

Conrath, Jerry. "Effective Schools Must Focus on Potential Dropouts." National Association of Secondary School Principals 70 (February 1986) 46-50.

Some people do not feel that trying to develop alternative programs or schools to prevent dropouts is worth the time, effort, or money that it requires. Conrath said that, "Dropout prevention is no frill; it is as solid an achievement as raising test scores, winning an athletic championship, and improving daily attendance." Anonymity of large middle and high schools contributes to the problem of dropouts. Alternative schools that are smaller, have a clear purpose, and interrelated curriculum can be beneficial to both regular students and potential dropouts as each group shares their knowledge and skills and strengths. ". . . The student without academic skills often has learned to value problem solving and creative thinking in order to cope."

Conrath's final statement on alternative schools was that, "Nothing is more compatible with American ideology than options, choices, alternatives. By adopting these strategies and being ready to confront the opposition with solid answers, education will promote variety in schools systems and lower dropout rates."

Hahn, Andrew. "Reaching Out to America's Dropouts: What To Do." Phi Delta Kappan (December 1987): 256-63.

Hahn's article was a synthesis "of research findings and program practices in dropout services and prevention." Hahn stated that in 1985 13 percent of students between ages 16 and 24 dropped out of school. There were more boys than girls; most were poor; the greatest percentage were in the Southwest. One of the reforms needed to alleviate the situation is more alternative programs. "Alternative schools are often the best available option for both potential and actual dropouts" (262). Many improve their attendance and complete more credits, but, while "alternative schools work well for highly motivated former dropouts, they do not always work so well for others" (261). Three critical elements for success of a program are: the students must be challenged academically; counseling is provided; and there is a caring staff. Other factors that promote success are "highly targeted services for a relatively homogeneous school population, strong principals, small school size, teachers who actively participate in counseling students, students involvement in school governance and classroom activity, opportunity for learning by doing, and clear standards, rules, and regulations" (261).

Kagan, Dona M. "A Discriminant Analysis of Alternative Versus Regular High School Students." The High School Journal 71 (December/January 1988): 60-8.

Kagan described her research on high school dropouts. She found that, contrary to most studies, "dropout students from the alternative high school did not appear to have significantly lower self-esteem or more external locus of control than their counterparts from the regular high school" (64). She also found that regular high school students regarded school as more important and more relevant and that the social aspect of school was not as important to dropout students in alternative programs. She said that "the single most distinguishing and consistent characteristic of the alternative school student was lack of family support, cohesion, and perceived approval" (65). Kagan, therefore, suggested that those concerned with dropouts would do well to focus on the family as "the alternative school students appeared to be more negatively affected by stresses in the family than in the school environment" (67).

Wehlage, Gary G. "At-Risk Students and the Need for High School Reform." National Center on Effective Secondary Schools, Madison, Wisconsin. 1987: 18-28.

Wehlage, in this paper, voiced his concern with public school's response to at-risk students. The reasons for dropping out are "low achievement, course failure, drug or alcohol dependency, or pregnancy" (18). Family situations that contribute to the problem are poverty and only one parent in the home. Schools must work to allow these students to succeed. Wehlage stated, "We need to discover what it is about school that produces failure and negative experiences for the at-risk and, correspondingly, what institutional characteristics and strategies can produce success and positive experiences for these same adolescents" (20). At-risk students when asked to rate their school on three categories--teacher interest in students, effectiveness of the school's discipline system, and fairness of the school's discipline system--responded negatively to each (21).

Wehlage then proposed a model program based on research that would better meet the needs of these students. It would be small in size, have teachers committed to seeing that their students succeeded, have students committed to the program and willing to meet its expectations for behavior.

Wehlage, Gary G., Robert A. Rutter, and Anne Turnbaugh. "A Program Model for At-Risk High School Students." Educational Leadership (March 1987): 70-3.

Wehlage described a model, based on research, of an alternative program that could be housed either within a school or as a separate facility dedicated to keeping at-risk students in school. Such a program, he says, should be small so that teachers can "communicate the sense of caring that students perceive as absent in the regular high school" (71). It allows teachers to individualize instruction and facilitates communication among faculty. It promotes a feeling among teachers of accountability for the program and for the success of the students.

Such a program would be voluntary and require a commitment from the students "to a set of rules, work expectations, and standards of behavior" (72). Curriculum and teaching must be different from regular high school. "Individualization, clear objectives, prompt feedback, concrete evidence of progress, and an active role for students are some of the dominant features" (72-73). Although most students will need remediation, and some time will be allowed for it, other important activities include: "sex education and parenting instruction; health care and nutrition education; and community social service" (73). To improve social skills and attitudes, students are encouraged to be volunteers in nursing homes, day care centers, handicapped facilities, or have internships in hospitals, law enforcement agencies, or newspapers.

Such a program was implemented in nine Wisconsin schools. The effectiveness of the program in these schools was evaluated with encouraging results.

Examples

Benedict, Richard R., Richard Snell, and Donald Miller. "Enterprise High: Helping School Dropouts Become Self-Supporting Adults." Educational Leadership (March 1987): 75-8.

The author described the program at Enterprise High for students who have dropped out. It focuses on two issues: "how to earn a living and how to manage life" (76). The students start an actual business in which they produce and sell a product. In conjunction with this are simulations of paying for housing, food, insurance, marriage, and children. The learning of basic skills and problem solving are part of the business and the simulations. "About four out of five entering students (all former dropouts) complete the year program. About two-thirds of them go on to graduate" (77). Major life changes away from drugs and criminal patterns or welfare were made in about one-fifth of the students. The authors stated that the most important aspect of the program was developing a supportive atmosphere in which students were not afraid to fail and allowing enough time for them to succeed.

Fizzell, Robert L. "Inside a School of Choice." Phi Delta Kappan (June 1987): 758-60.

"When students are allowed to choose the schools they will attend, they have a commitment to those schools and an investment in the learning experiences that those schools offer" (758). With this opening statement Fizzell began his article describing his experience at the Alternative Learning Center in Vancouver, Washington. He attributed its success to flexible scheduling, the chance for independent study, helping troubled students find assistance from appropriate people and agencies, and giving students more control over their participation in the school.

Fizzle stated that an admission procedure that provided information about the program, screening of students who would do well in it, and orientation for the students so they know what to expect was best.

Jacques, Mary Jo. "The Metropolitan Youth Education Center: A Colorado Solution to the Problem of High School Dropouts." Phi Delta Kappan (October 1982): 136-37.

The Denver Metropolitan Youth Education Center accepts students who have dropped out for six months or who have been recommended by an administrator of a former school and who "show promise of success" (136). It helps the students earn high school credits and offers vocational training. The classes are small and scheduling is flexible allowing students choices of class time to accommodate child care or work hours. Students work at their own pace taking as much time as needed to complete a course. "The philosophy of the Center is to 'deny students the right to fail' by giving them unlimited chances to succeed" (137).

Maben, Meri. "A Brighter Road for Pregnant Teens." Thrust 17 (April 1988): 28.

Maben described an alternative program in California for pregnant teens called the Young Parents Center. In addition to traditional high school classes, it offers free child care, transportation, lunches, and counseling. It also offers vocational classes and a mandatory parenting class.

Reinhartsen, Bette. "Challenger Clinic Keeps Dropouts Learning." National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin 71 (October 1987): 137-38.

Reinhartsen described an alternative program in Anaheim, California, that attracted the re-entry of dropouts. Computer-assisted instruction was used in teaching basic skills. There was an emphasis on communication skills and life-coping skills and on helping students to develop "employability attitudes and customer contact skills" (137). Hours were flexible to accommodate students needing extra help and those who worked. A child care center was provided.

Robbins, Jeffrey, Stephen Mills, and William Clark. "Alternative Programs: Sometimes They Work, Sometimes They Don't." National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin 65 (May 1981): 48-56.

This article talked about the Alternative Studies Program in Shrewsbury High School which has enrolled about 100 students who are potential or "in-school" dropouts. There are three stages to the program and students may be placed in any one of them. In Stage 1 students are in off-campus classes geared toward vocational training half of the day and either in jobs or back at their home school the other half. In Stage 2 students are in their home school but in carefully selected classes and evening group activities. In Stage 3 the students attend regular classes but meet regularly for individual or group counseling.

The authors felt that the most effective alternative programs were part of regular high schools thus preventing competition, suspicion, and hostility between the regular program and the alternative. They stated that where the programs were separate, "Students in both programs are robbed of the benefits of interaction with peers who march to different drummers."

SCHOOLS DESIGNED AROUND SPECIAL PHILOSOPHIES OR METHODS

Examples

Amenta, Robert. "Walls Go Down; Learning Opportunities Increase." Thrust 7 (May 1978): 11, 12, 17.

The author described Horizon High School in Bakersfield, California, an alternative school for juniors and seniors in the area. The school is committed to using the community to provide "life-like learning experiences" (11). Students must participate in community service. They must also complete regular high school courses, but in these courses people from the community are brought in frequently to speak; and there are many field trips included in the courses. The school believes it is responsible "for preparing [its students] for the future by facilitating the ability to change and encouraging [them] to engage in the process of search and discovery of the world around" (17)

Copen, Peter, and Eugene Lebwohl. "The Rite of Passage for Walkabout." Phi Delta Kappan (May 1984): 602-03.

The authors described the growth of their Walkabout program for high school juniors and seniors since its beginning in 1977 in Yorktown Heights, N. Y. It was a program that combined the philosophies of Walkabout--"We need to provide for our adolescents a transition to adulthood through growing achievement in a range of adult skills;"--and Outward Bound--"We learn fastest (and perhaps best) when we are challenged." The program felt that the development of students' confidence, positive attitude, and skills were necessary to be effective. The most important environmental element in helping the transition from adolescence to adulthood "is the creation of a sense of community--the feeling that a group of people have a common purpose or intent" (602). Because they found that better parenting skills could help students with self-esteem, responsibility, and motivation, parent seminars were conducted.

Ellsberry, James L. "Learning Unlimited Revisited." Phi Delta Kappan (May 1984): 605.

Ellsberry described the school-within-a-school at North Central High School in Indianapolis established for students "whose personal or educational needs were not being adequately met through traditional patterns of schooling" (605). Individualized instructional programs were developed for each student utilizing community resources "to strengthen the links between school, home, and community." Experiential learning was considered as important as classroom learning.

Gray, Peter, and David Chanoff. "When Play is Learning: A School Designed for Self-Directed Education." Phi Delta Kappan (May 1984): 608-11.

Sudbury Valley School's philosophy is that "students must direct their own education" (609). All decisions are made by students and faculty together. There is no curriculum, no academic requirements, no grades. Students pursue their own interests with staff acting as tutors and guides to resources needed to find answers to their questions. The authors state that "learning occurs . . . because children are allowed to play to the fullest; that is, they are allowed to pursue their interests to the fullest" (610). All activities are open to students from ages 8 to 18. Gray and Chanoff state that this "provides a continuum of possible role models" and "provides a powerful impetus for . . . getting along together. . . . Respect for others and toleration of differences are values that children see as enabling them to get along with those who are older and stronger" (611).

Harvey, Judy. "Challenge Education at New Garden Friends School." Phi Delta Kappan (May 1984): 604-05.

Harvey described the New Garden Friends School, Greensboro, North Carolina. A typical high school program is carried on in the morning, but the afternoons are devoted to "Challenge Education," a program which is partly structured by the teacher to include art, drama, psychology, and history and partly designed by the students in creating individual challenges. Sample projects have been learning auto mechanics, studying dying in a hospice program, serving as an intern with a park ranger, and training for a triathlon. The author stressed the importance of teachers' modeling their own meeting of new challenges.

Langberg, Arnold. "From Practice to Theory." Phi Delta Kappan (May 1984): 603-04.

Langberg described the Walkabout program at Jefferson County Open High School, Evergreen, Colorado. There are three phases though which a student moves: (1)Beginnings--an orientation period in which new students are helped to "focus on their personal and social needs, to understand our system of self-evaluation, to expand their notions of the learning environment to include the city and the wilderness, and to get to know the staff well enough to choose an advisor"; (2) Pre-Walkabout in which students master 50 skills that have been "determined as necessary for productive and satisfying adult lives"; and (3) Passages in which the students develop a "challenging project of use in the real world" (604).

GUIDELINES FOR ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS

Case, Barbara J. "Lasting Alternatives: A Lesson in Survival." Phi Delta Kappan 62 (April 1981): 554-57.

Case, in analyzing alternative schools that have survived, found that they had these elements in common that contributed to their success. (1) The programs were still attractive to the students and parents. (2) "School leaders [had] not lost sight of their purpose" (554). Their goals were clear "serving as the single most important standard by which to evaluate all decisions" (555). (3) They had won support of the community. (4) Because of the community support they had been assured of continued funding. (5) There was a "positive school climate" (557) that enhanced staff commitment. "The surviving alternative schools have managed to maintain climates in which staff members do not exhaust their energies but continually renew them" (557).

Collins, Roger L. "Parents' Views of Alternative Public School Programs." Education and Urban Society (May 1987): 290-302.

Alternative schools have proven to be more effective than traditional schools in combatting the school dropout problem. However, there is some question as to whether alternatives can significantly influence parents' choice of schools. In a survey conducted by the Institute for Policy Research, University of Cincinnatti, it was found that noncurricular considerations such as school's proximity to home, the fact that it was a neighborhood school and convenient, were more important in their choice than special programs. It was also found that parents would choose a school that emphasized basic skills over one that offered specialized subject matter. The author suggested that those who design programs to attract dropouts keep these facts in mind.

Schrumpf, Fred, and Dan Kurtz. "Developing Alternative Education Options." National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin (April 1980): 39-47.

The authors described how an alternative program could be developed. They suggested this sequence of events. (1) Recognition of the need for alternatives by a group of parents or teachers and parents. (2) Elicit support from the school board and set district policy as to the nature of the alternative--assurance that basic education objectives would be met, that it would be open to all teachers and students by choice, that costs per student would not greatly increase. (3) Develop a specific program that meets the need already identified. The authors stated that the most important factors in maintaining an alternative program are "evaluation and accountability" (46).

Whalen, Barry. "Developing an Alternative High School: Do's and Don'ts." National Association of Secondary Schools Principals Bulletin 69 (September 1985): 106-9.

Barry stated that "alternative high school seems to be the most promising choice for educators attempting to reduce the dropout rate" (107); and he makes the following suggestions about establishing an alternative school. (1) Establish a philosophy that has a solid core and establish a selection policy. (2) Develop a curriculum that is not only remedial but offers challenges. (3) Include parents and students in making decisions as to whether the student should be in the program. (4) Have parents act as advisors for the program. (5) Locate school a distance from regular high school. (6) An authority figure that is "able to give direction to the total educational environment" (108) must be there full time. (7) Keep the school board and public informed. (8) Program should include activities such as work experiences or volunteering for which students can get credit.

SUMMARY

"Nothing is more compatible with American ideology than options, choice, alternatives" (Conrath, 58) Americans want to choose the kind of car they drive, where they live, the kind of work they do, the church they attend. It is certainly not surprising that they also want a choice of the school their children attend. States that offer choice have found that it helped to "reduce dropouts, increase student achievement and appreciation of learning, improve parental involvement and satisfaction, encourage racial and economic integration, provide extra challenge for students dissatisfied with conventional programs, and raise the morale of educators who were allowed to create distinctive programs from which families can choose" (Nathan, "Prospects," 747). Barr ("Eighties") concurs and adds that alternatives can also help reduce problems of violence and vandalism and can improve students' attitudes and self-concepts.

While traditional curriculum and teaching methods allow most students to succeed, Reckinger (255) insists that they do not accommodate oral, kinesthetic, or independent learners and that students should have choices of alternative programs that best match their learning styles. Sherew (8) believes that "our system of education must optimize human achievement by offering students an educational atmosphere that brings out their full potential."

Problems posed by Murname in allowing families choice were: providing all families sufficient information to make informed program decisions, assuring that students didn't choose programs that were inappropriate for them, and assuring that all students had access to the programs. He also stated that an increase in curriculum choices had contributed to a reduction of basic skills

(22). Other concerns--that choices will "destroy the public schools," that they will not meet the needs of the handicapped or minority students--have proven groundless (Nathan, "Reality," 476-477).

The civil rights movement of the 1960's spawned the beginnings of the alternative movement. A backlash against segregation "led to the establishment of temporary freedom schools in storefronts and church basements" (Fantini, 139). Fantini lists three other trends that contributed to the growth of alternative public education: (1) the counter culture movement interested in developing "new learning environments that [were] personally liberating and geared to individual and group life styles" (140); (2) British open classrooms; and (3) the voucher plan. The movement thrived as there was increased concern about the dropout problem and as the anti-establishment fervor lessened (Helm, 55). The movement has grown from the small, experimental schools to "a network of alternatives which have become incorporated into a growing number of school systems across the country" (Helm, 57).

Raywid ("Synthesis," 71) identified six common characteristics of alternative schools: (1) a strong sense of affiliation and loyalty to the unit both on the part of the faculty and on the part of the students; (2) students and staff there by choice; (3) the alternative is designed to respond to particular needs or interests not met in local schools; (4) developing the whole person, not only academics, is considered important; (5) most are smaller than traditional schools; (6) and they may be self-contained or a part of the regular school. Powell et al. add that alternative programs also share the following traits: unusual support from a group either within the school or from

outside, an admissions process, extra attention for students from parents and teachers, and high morale of teachers (143, 144).

Duke and Muzio reported that objectives cited most often in their review of alternative schools were the "development of language, reading, and mathematics skills" (468). Although "they attract academically competent white, middle class students" (468), six of the 19 they reviewed had at least 40 percent black students. There is a common set of core values shared by alternative schools, according to Smith et al. (494)--flexibility, responsibility, warmth, freedom, individuality, involvement and control.

There appear to be a number of advantages to being a student in an alternative school. There is a greater feeling of satisfaction derived, Raywid says ("Synthesis," 73), from the smallness of the program which enables students to know each other and the faculty better; from having fewer bureaucratic controls; more freedom in clothing, language, and personal style; a strong sense of power; more and broader responsiblity; greater flexibility in what is studied; and teachers who care. Duke and Muzio stated that alternative schools report better attendance and classroom performance and fewer dropouts. They also found improved social behavior--less fighting, fewer racial problem, and decreased drug use. This was contrary, however, to a study reported by Beauvais and Oetting. In the alternative high school they studied they found drug use of all kinds much higher than in the corresponding regular high school. A questionnaire developed and administered by Smith et al. (562) revealed that alternative schools better meet the social, esteem, and self-actualization needs of their students, but found no difference between alternative and regular schools in meeting security needs.

Carrison (32-5) voiced the most objections to alternative programs, particularly magnet schools. He feared that their students might receive an education that was too specialized and that tracking might occur "intensifying socioeconomic class divisions within our society" (33). He was also skeptical that competent teachers could be found without depleting the staff of regular schools.

Argyris described the decline of alternative schools that he studied. He said that at the end of a year most had reverted to traditional patterns--teachers withdrawing, an increase in vandalism, teachers exerting more control over classes, and less open-ended activity.

Although there are differences in alternative and traditional schools, there is some question as to whether that difference is significant in academic achievement (Duke and Muzio, 469; Duke and Perry, 376; Barr and Colston, 27-28; Raywid, "Synthesis," 77). Instruction in both kinds of schools is remarkably similar (Raywid, "Synthesis," 73; Parrett, 603).

Both traditional and alternative teachers listed as most important "selecting appropriate learning activities, planning those activities, and presenting subject matter both visually and orally" (Parrett, 603). Both groups favored such "nontraditional practices as individualizing instruction, pass/fail grading. . . and out of school experiences" (Parrett, 603). However, alternative schools were more likely to use independent study and experiential learning (Raywid, "Synthesis," 75). Teachers in traditional schools used lectures and objective tests more frequently and were more concerned with quiet classrooms. Teachers in alternative schools feel a greater sense of power, team cooperation, trust, and teacher involvement; while those in traditional schools rated their

schools higher in bureaucratization (Nirenberg, 100).

Most alternative schools, according to Raywid ("Status," 25) exhibit greater student-teacher interaction, more independent study, multi-age arrangement, peer tutoring, community service activities, the expectation that teachers will succeed with all students, and better student behavior. Weber and Selchler add to this list of differences a different environment, low teacher-pupil ratio, and the use of a combination of "remedial basic skills, parental involvement, work experience, . . . counseling, supportive services, and vocational training" (72).

Students' values in some alternative schools are different from their corresponding traditional schools. Ogletree and Bryant reported that a survey of black students in an inner city Chicago alternative high school found those students to be more conservative in matters of hairstyle and dress and acceptable classroom behavior but more assertive in demanding students' rights. Students in alternative schools showed greater responsibility in their moral decisions and greater social responsibility (Higgins).

There are three broad groups of alternative schools--schools designed around specific curriculum, schools designed around special groups of students, and schools designed around special philosophies or instructional methods. Magnet schools, the largest group of schools with special curriculum, were designed to attract students and faculty by their curricular emphasis. They are generally organized around a central theme--math, science, music and art, the humanities, or career-vocational; or they may offer specialized training in aviation, in international affairs, or in health occupations. There have been charges of elitism (Norris, 32), refuted by Doyle (19).

There are alternative schools designed for special groups of students, notably, dropouts and pregnant girls. Alternative programs that are small, less anonymous, ones that can offer flexible hours and child care, and that "communicate a sense of caring that students perceive as absent in the regular high school" (Wehlage et al., 71) have been more successful than traditional programs in meeting the needs of potential or actual dropouts and of pregnant teenagers (Collins, 290; Hahn, 262; Whalen, 107). Most dropout programs combine vocational training with regular classes and special classes in sex education, parenting, communication and life-coping skills. The common philosophy seems to be, "'Deny students the right to fail' by giving them unlimited chances to succeed" (Jacques, 137). Robbins et al. stated that the most effective dropout programs were part of regular high schools thus preventing competition, suspicion, and hostility between the two programs (49); but Whalen (107) felt they should be separate and located a distance from regular school.

Open schools, free schools, continuous progress schools, and Montessori are programs that evolve from a special philosophy or instructional approach. Many of these schools expect a great deal of involvement of their students in the community, encouraging them to volunteer in community organizations and to use community resources in completing their class projects. Sample projects designed by students at the New Garden Friends School were: studying dying in a hospice, serving as an intern with a park ranger, and training for a triathlon (Harvey, 604). The students frequently are allowed more freedom in designing their own program and often work through contracts or learning packages (Johnson, 317).

Guidelines suggested for initiating an alternative program are: (1) Recognition of an unmet need by parents or teachers and parents (Shrumpf and Kurtz); (2) Establish clear philosophy and goals being cognizant of including mastery of essential skills and knowledge; (3) Elicit support of school board and community; (4) Develop a curriculum that is not only remedial but offers challenges and includes activities such as work experiences or volunteering (Whalen, 107); (5) Establish an admissions policy that includes consultation with parents and students (Whalen, 107); (6) Head the program with a full-time authority figure that is "able to give direction to the total educational environment" (Whalen, 108); (7) Be aware in choice of location that parents in choosing a school are more concerned with proximity and convenience than with the kind of program offered (Collins); (8) Provide transportation for all students.

Case found the following common elements in alternative schools that have survived: (1) Programs were still attractive to students and parents; (2) "School leaders had not lost sight of their purpose" (554). (3) They had won the support of the community assuring continued funding; (4) There was a "positive school climate" (557).

CONCLUSION

Students involved in choosing their school are more likely to succeed. "When students are allowed to choose the schools they will attend, they have a commitment to those schools and an investment in the learning experiences that these schools offer" (Fizzell, 758). Alternative schools promote greater satisfaction among students and teachers and, consequently, better attitudes

and behavior; but there is little difference between alternative and regular schools in their success in teaching academics. Alternative programs are better able to meet the needs of at-risk students and keep them in school. The three most important characteristics of successful alternative schools are their small size; caring, committed teachers, and the fact that teachers and students chose to be there. Fantini says that by offering more alternatives, "Over time we could emerge a redefined system of public education that is diverse, self-renewing, and responsive to a pluralistic society" (142).

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. School districts offer alternative programs to combat the problems of segregation and better meet the needs of at-risk students.
2. School districts allow parents and students choice in the school they attend in situations where this can be done without disturbing racial balance and where transportation can be provided to all.
3. If alternative programs are not possible, create smaller, self-contained units within regular schools that could capitalize on some of the benefits that alternatives offer--students and teachers know each other, students feel a greater responsibility for and identification with the unit, and teachers feel committed to the success of the students and are concerned about student problems both in and out of school.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Amenta, Robert. "Walls Go Down; Learning Opportunities Increase." Thrust 7 (May 1978): 11, 12, 17. (27)

Argyris, Chris. "Alternative Schools: A Behavioral Analysis." Teachers College Record (May 1974): 429-52. (11, 34)

Barr, Robert D. "Alternatives for the Eighties; A Second Decade of Development." Phi Delta Kappan 62 (April 1981): 570-73. (3, 4, 31)

Barr, Robert, Bruce Colston, William Parrett. "The Effectiveness of Alternative Public Schools: An Analysis of Six School Evaluations." Viewpoint 53 (July 1977): 1-30. (18, 34)

Beauvais, F., and E. R. Oetting. "Drug Use In an Alternative High School." Journal of Drug Education 16 (1986): 43-50. (11, 33)

Benedict, Richard R., Richard Snell, and Donald Miller. "Enterprise High: Helping School Dropouts Become Self-Supporting Adults." Educational Leadership (March 1987): 75-8. (24)

Campbell, Erin E. "School for Scholars." American Educator 19 (July 1983): 36-39. (20)

Carrison, Muriel P. "Do Magnet Schools Really Work?" Principal 60 (January 81): 32-5. (12, 34)

Case, Barbara J. "Lasting Alternatives: A Lesson in Survival." Phi Delta Kappan 62 (April 1981): 554-57. (29, 37)

Collins, Roger L. "Parents' Views of Alternative Public School Programs." Education and Urban Society (May 1987): 290-302. (29, 36, 37)

Conrath, Jerry. "Effective Schools Must Focus on Potential Dropouts." National Association of Secondary School Principals 70 (February 1986): 46-50. (21, 31)

Copen, Peter, and Eugene Lebwohl. "The Rite of Passage for Walkabout." Phi Delta Kappan (May 1984): 602-03. (27)

Doyle, Dennis P. and Marsha Levine. "Magnet Schools." Microfiche. Education Policy Studies Occasional Papers, American Interprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Washington, D. C., 1983. (19, 35)

Duke, Daniel L., and Cheryl Perry. "Can Alternative Schools Succeed Where Benjamin Spock, Spiro Agnew, and B. F. Skinner Have Failed?" Adolescence 13 (Fall 1978): 375-92. (12, 34)

Duke, Daniel L., and Irene Muzio. "How Effective Are Alternative Schools? A Review of Recent Evaluations and Reports." Teachers College Record 79 (February 1978): 461-83. (13, 33, 34)

Ellsberry, James L. "Learning Unlimited Revisited." Phi Delta Kappan (May 1984): 605. (27)

Fantini, Mario D. "The What, Why, and Where of the Alternatives Movement." The Education Digest 51 (November 1985) 139-42. (1, 7, 32, 38)

Fizzell, Robert L. "Inside a School of Choice." Phi Delta Kappan (June 1987): 758-60. (24, 37)

Gage, N. L., and David Berliner. "Motivation and Personality." Educational Psychology. New York: Harper & Row, 1954. 383-384. (3)

Good, Carter V., Editor. Dictionary of Education, 3rd edition. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1973. (3)

Gray, Peter, and David Chanoff. "When Play is Learning: A School Designed for Self-Directed Education." Phi Delta Kappan (May 1984): 608-11. (28)

Gregory, Thomas B., and Gerald R. Smith. "Differences Between Alternative and Conventional Schools in Meeting Students' Needs." Microfiche. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Education Research Association, Montreal, April 11, 1983. (14)

Hahn, Andrew. "Reaching Out to America's Dropouts: What To Do." Phi Delta Kappan (December 1987): 256-63. (21, 36)

Harvey, Judy. "Challenge Education at New Garden Friends School." Phi Delta Kappan (May 1984): 604-05. (28, 36)

Hein, George E. "Open Education." Handbook on Contemporary Education. New York: R. R. Bowker Co., 1976. 551. (3)

Helm, Virginia. "Alternative Education: Metamorphosis of a Movement." The Educational Forum 44 (November 1979): 53-57. (7, 32)

Higgen, Ann, and others. "Student Judgments of Responsibility and the Moral Atmosphere of High Schools: A Comparative Study. Revised." Microfiche. Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. 1981. (14)

Jacques, Mary Jo. "The Metropolitan Youth Education Center: A Colorado Solution to the Problem of High School Dropouts." Phi Delta Kappan (October 1982): 136-37. (25, 36)

Johnson, H. R. "Alternative Schools: A Salvage Operation?" Clearing House 55 (March 1982): 317-18. (18, 36)

Kagan, Dona M. "A Discriminant Analysis of Alternative Versus Regular High School Students." The High School Journal 71 (December/January 1988): 60-8. (22)

Langberg, Arnold. "From Practice to Theory." Phi Delta Kappan (May 1984): 603-04. (28)

Maben, Meri. "A Brighter Road for Pregnant Teens." Thrust 17 (April 1988): 28. (25)

Miller, William, and others. "Louisiana's Alternative High School for Foreign Language and International Studies." Microfiche. Paper presented at Annual Meetings of the National Council for Social Studies and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language. San Francisco, 1983. (20)

Murname, Richard J. "Family Choice in Public Education: Possibilities and Limitations." Microfiche. Howard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1984. (4, 31)

Nathan, Joe. "Results and Future Prospects of State Efforts to Increase Choice Among Schools." Phi Delta Kappan (June 1987): 746-52. (5, 31)

Nathan, Joe. "The Rhetoric and the Reality of Expanding Educational Choice." Phi Delta Kappan 66 (March 1985): 476-81. (5, 32)

Nirenberg, John. "A Comparison of the Management Systems of Traditional and Alternative Public High Schools." Educational Administration Quarterly 13 (Winter 1977): 86-104. (15, 35)

Norris, Bill. "Reaping the Whirlwind." Times Educational Supplement 3678 (December 26, 1986): 32. (19, 35)

Ogletree, Earl J., and Valerie A. Bryant. "Inner-City Alternative Students Conservative, but Know Rights." Phi Delta Kappan 62: (April 1981) 602. (15, 35)

Parrett, Williana H. "Conventional vs. Alternative Schools: How Different Are the Teachers." Phi Delta Kappan 62 (April 1981): 603. (16, 34)

Powell, Arthur G., Eleanor Farrar, and David K. Cohen. "Specialty Shops." The Shopping Mall High School. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985. 129-132. (8, 32)

Raywid, Mary Anne. "Synthesis of Research on Schools of Choice." Educational Leadership 41 (April 1984): 70-8. (1, 3, 8, 32, 33, 34)

Raywid, Mary Anne. "The Current Status of Schools of Choice in Public Secondary Education: Alternatives, Options, Magnets." Microfiche. Hofstra University, Hempstead, N. Y. 1982: 1-38. (16, 35)

Reckinger, Nancy. "Choice as a Way to Quality Learning." Educational Leadership 36 (January 1979): 255-6. (5, 31)

Reinhartsen, Bette. "Challenger Clinic Keeps Dropouts Learning." National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin 71 (October 1987): 137-38. (25)

Robbins, Jeffrey, Stephen Mills, and William Clark. "Alternative Programs: Sometimes They Work, Sometimes They Don't." National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin 65 (May 1981): 48-56. (1, 26, 36)

Schrumpf, Fred, and Dan Kurtz. "Developing Alternative Education Options." National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin (April 1980): 39-47. (30, 37)

Scovic, Stephen P. "Some of Those Ideas We Mistook for Panaceas Deserve Another Chance." American School Board Journal 72 (July 1985): 28-9. (6)

Sherew, Ken. "Alternatives: A Way of Life." Thrust 17 (April 1988): 8-9. (6, 31)

Smith, Gerald R., Marion McCollum, and George Barclay. "Student and Teacher Perception of Values Promoted by Public Alternative High Schools." Phi Delta Kappan 61 (March 1980): 494-5. (9)

Smith, Gerald R., Thomas B. Gregory, and Richard C. Pugh. "Meeting Student Needs: Evidence of the Superiority of Alternative Schools." Phi Delta Kappan (April 1981): 561-64. (9, 33)

Stevens, Marcia. "Characteristics of Alternative Schools." American Educational Research Journal (Spring 1985): 135-48 (10)

"Technology and the At-Risk Student." Electronic Learning (November/December 1988): 35. (1, 3)

Wardle, Francis. "Can Free Schools Survive?" Education 100 (Winter 1979): 165-9. (3, 13)

Weber, James M., and Judith A. Sechler. "Characteristics of Exemplary Vocational Education Programs Designed to Prevent At-Risk Youth from Dropping Out." Educational Leadership (March 1987): 72. (17, 35)

Wehlage, Gary G. "At-Risk Students and the Need for High School Reform." National Center on Effective Secondary Schools, Madison, Wisconsin. 1987: 18-28. (3, 22)

Wehlage, Gary G., Robert A. Rutter, and Anne Turnbaugh. "A Program Model for At-Risk High School Students." Educational Leadership (March 1987): 70-3. (22, 35)

Whalen, Barry. "Developing an Alternative High School: Do's and Don'ts." National Association of Secondary Schools Principals Bulletin 69 (September 1985): 106-9. (30, 36, 37)

Wolf, W.C., Jr., and Mike Barkhurst. "Initiating, Sustaining Alternative Schools." Phi Delta Kappan 59 (May 1978): 635-6. (10)

Student Qualifications:

Name: Sherry Urbach Address: 18319 Clairmont
South Bend, IN 46637

Education: B. S. in Education, University of Nebraska, 1959

Employment: 1979-present. A part-time teacher in the School-Aged Mothers Program, South Bend Public Schools

My interest in alternative education stems from my experience as a parent and as a teacher. We have chosen alternative schools for our children. They were students in a college laboratory elementary school in Oregon, were enrolled in the initial alternative program South Bend offered, and they have been in the MACPO program. I am presently a teacher in the School-Aged Mothers Program, an alternative South Bend offers to pregnant teenagers.